

THE BOOK OF ACTS

ACTS 6:11-15 | LESSON SUMMARY

Stephen

ACTS 6:11, "But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." (ESV)

- Division
 - Tensions continue to escalate
 - Resistance is not the majority, but there are some wielding considerable influence.
 - The New Covenant is just that, NEW
 - Stephen's teaching is in line with Jesus
- Right in front of you
 - Those opposing Stephen use manipulation: their tactics are fear & confusion

ACTS 6:12, "...and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law." (ESV)

- Out of context:
 - Moses
 - God
 - The Temple
- Stephen's goal was never to blaspheme God, Moses, or the temple, which is why Scripture tells us that these men were "false witnesses"



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Cult of Stephen

ACTS 6:15, "And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel." (ESV)

- Miraculous, yet man
 - Stephen was without question a man filled with the Holy Spirit who accomplished tremendous things.
 - However, his purpose was to draw attention to God, not himself.
- Division & Isolation
 - "Us vs Them" mentality results in confused theology: Stephen becomes a kind of idol.
 - "Upon the martyrdom of Stephen came the first and greatest persecution of the Church in Jerusalem by the Jews [γενομένου δῆτα ἐπὶ τῆ τοῦ Στεφάνου μαρτυρία πρώτου καὶ μεγίστου πρὸς αὐτῶν Ἰουδαίων κατὰ τῆς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐκκλησίας διωγμοῦ]" –Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History
 - "The Church of the Gentiles was baptized in the blood of Stephen." –J. B. Lightfoot, "St. Paul and the Three"

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Luke Strelan, *Strange Acts; Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles*, Randall Price, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archeology*, *The Holman Bible Atlas*

